AVATAR

The Last Airbender

Show #214

BOOK TWO: EARTH
CHAPTER FOURTEEN: "City of Walls and Secrets"

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ACT ONE

INT. BA SING SE MONORAIL - DAY

The kids ride the train across the agrarian zone between the outer and inner walls of Ba Sing Se. Katara looks out the window and sees-

KATARA
Look, the inner wall! I can't believe we finally made it to Ba Sing Se in one piece.

SOKKA
Hey, don't jinx it, we could still be attacked by some giant exploding Fire Nation spoon, or find out the city's been submerged in an ocean full of killer shrimp.

TOPH
You been hitting the cactus juice again?

SOKKA
I'm just saying, weird stuff happens to us.

Aang looks out the window forlornly at the giant wall that surrounds the city, stretching on as far as the eye can see.

KATARA
Don't worry, Aang, we'll find Appa.

AANG
It's such a big city.

SOKKA
He's a giant bison. Where could someone possibly hide him?

The monorail goes through the wall and the kids get their first glimpse of the giant metropolis that is Ba Sing Se.

SOKKA
Oh...

They stare in awe as the train rumbles on toward its station.

EXT. BA SING SE TRAIN STATION - LATER

The kids step off the train onto the busy platform. Katara and Sokka look around at all the activity, wide-eyed.

Toph sighs sadly.

TOPH
Back in the city. Great.

SOKKA
What's the problem? It's amazing!

TOPH
Just a bunch of walls and rules. You wait. You'll get sick of it in a couple of days.

Aang pulls out his bison whistle and blows it.

AANG
(softly)
I'm coming for you, buddy.
(to Katara)
He's here. I can feel it.

She puts her hand on his shoulder, reassuring him. As the kids look around the busy station, JOO DEE, an aggressively happy, well-dressed, middle-aged woman walks up to them and bows.

JOO DEE
Hello, my name is Joo Dee. I have been given the great honor of showing the Avatar around Ba Sing Se.
(looking at the kids)
And you must be Sokka, Katara, and Toph. Welcome to our wonderful city. Shall we get started? *

Sokka anxiously steps up.

SOKKA
Yes. We have information about the Fire Nation Army that we need to deliver to the Earth King immediately.

Joo Dee totally ignores him and keeps smiling.

JOO DEE
Great! Let's begin our tour, and then I'll show you to your new home here. I think you'll like it.

She starts off, indicating that the kids should follow her. Sokka gets a confused look.

SOKKA
Maybe you missed what I said. We need to talk to the king about the war. It's important.

Joo Dee bristles a little, but maintains her icy smile.

JOO DEE
You're in Ba Sing Se now. Everyone is safe here.

The kids trade puzzled looks as she leads them away briskly.

EXT. BA SING SE'S LOWER RING - DAY

A fancy carriage pulled by ostrich horses maneuvers through crowded streets filled with refugees and lower-class citizens of Ba Sing Se. It's reminiscent of New York at the beginning of the 20th century, with little shops, slums, recent immigrants pushing carts on the street, and some tough-looking characters.

INT. FANCY CARRIAGE

The kids ride with Joo Dee.

JOO DEE
This is the lower ring.

As the kids look out the window, they see a large wall blocking this part of the city from the center.

KATARA
What's that wall for?

JOO DEE
Oh, Ba Sing Se has many walls. There are the ones outside protecting us, and the ones inside that help maintain order. This is where our newest arrivals live, as well as our craftsmen and artisans, people that work with their hands. It's so quaint and lively...

The carriage passes two seedy-looking characters in an alleyway -- one showing the other a scary-looking knife. (Design note: one should be MUGGER who will appear in 2.15.)

JOO DEE
You do want to watch your step, though.

KATARA
(sotto, to Aang)
Why do they have all these poor people blocked off in one part of the city?

AANG
This is why I never came here before. I always heard it was so different from the way the monks taught us to live.

EXT. CENTRAL MARKETPLACE - SAME

Uncle and Zuko walk away from the market. Uncle carries an antique vase filled with flowers. Zuko glares.

UNCLE
I just want our new place to look nice -- in case someone brings home a lady friend.

He winks at Zuko, who just shakes his head.

ZUKO
This city is a prison. I don't want to make a life here.

UNCLE
Life happens wherever you are, whether you make it or not. Now come on, I found us some new jobs and we start this afternoon!

As they head down the street, we PULL BACK TO REVEAL Jet, Smellerbee and Longshot trailing them.

JET
Look at them. Firebenders living right under everyone's nose.

SMELLERBEE
Jet, you saw a man with a hot cup of tea. It doesn't prove he's a Firebender. And what if he is? Are we supposed to attack them? I thought we were starting over here, changing our ways.

She looks at Longshot, who nods supportively.

JET
We are. When I get the evidence I need, I'll report them to the police and let them handle it. Okay?

Smellerbee shares a worried look with Longshot.

EXT. BA SING SE'S MIDDLE RING - DAY

The kids' carriage tours the middle ring of the city, which is much more upscale than the outer ring.

JOO DEE
This is the middle ring of Ba Sing Se, home to the financial district, shops and restaurants, and the University.

SOKKA
Yeah, we met a professor from Ba Sing Se University. He took us to an ancient underground library where we discovered information about the war that is ABSOLUTELY CRUCIAL for the king to hear.

Joo Dee smiles, blithely.

JOO DEE
Isn't history fascinating? Look, here's one of the oldest buildings in the middle ring: Town Hall!

The carriage stops and the kids hop out. As they walk away-

SOKKA
Is that woman deaf? She only seems to hear every other word I say.

TOPH
It's called being "handled." Get used to it.

EXT. BA SING SE'S LOWER RING - DAY

Jet loiters outside a tea shop, occasionally peeking through the window at-

INT. TEA SHOP - SAME *

Uncle and Zuko wear aprons and listen to their new boss, PAO, a kindly middle-aged man.

PAO
Well, you certainly look like official tea servers. How do you feel?

ZUKO
(under his breath)
Ridiculous.

Uncle reaches awkwardly around behind his back, trying to tie his apron.

UNCLE
Uh, does this possibly come in a larger size?

PAO
I have extra string in the back. Have some tea while you wait.

He pours them two cups of tea and heads into the back. Uncle happily slurps some of his tea, then makes a disgusted face.

UNCLE
Ughh! This tea is nothing more than hot leaf juice!

ZUKO
Uncle, that's what all tea is.

UNCLE
(aghast)
How could a member of my own family say something so horrible? We'll have to make some major changes around here.

He takes the pot of tea that Pao poured from and dumps it out. Zuko rolls his eyes, totally uninterested.

EXT. BA SING SE'S UPPER RING - DAY

The kids' carriage drives through the upper ring, full of fancy homes and gleaming government buildings.

JOO DEE
The upper ring is home to our most important citizens. Your house is not too far from here.

The carriage passes an oval-shaped wall within the upper ring. Its massive gate is guarded by Earth Nation soldiers and serious-looking men in distinctive robes.

KATARA
What's inside that wall?

SOKKA
And who are the mean-looking guys in robes?

JOO DEE
Inside is the royal palace. Those men are agents of the Dai Li, the Cultural Authority of Ba Sing Se. They are the guardians of all our traditions.

She keeps smiling, but glances a little nervously at the Dai Li agents, who watch the carriage closely.

AANG
Can we see the king now?

JOO DEE
(LAUGHS) Oh, no. One doesn't just pop in on the Earth King.

The carriage moves on as the kids look out at the oval gate.

EXT. BA SING SE'S UPPER RING - A LITTLE LATER

The carriage pulls up in front of a very nice house, and Joo Dee leads the kids out to look at it.

JOO DEE
Here we are! Your new home!

She beams at the kids. A MESSENGER runs up and hands her a scroll, bows, and runs off. Joo Dee examines it and smiles.

JOO DEE
More good news! Your request for an audience with the Earth King is being processed, and should be put through in about a month! Much more quickly than usual!

The kids are shocked.

SOKKA
A month?!

JOO DEE
Six to eight weeks, actually.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. THE KIDS' NEW HOUSE - DAY

The kids look around their fancy new house. Joo Dee gestures at the lavish surroundings.

JOO DEE
Isn't it nice? I think you'll really enjoy it here.

SOKKA
I think we'd enjoy it more if we weren't staying so long. Can't we see the king any sooner?

JOO DEE
The Earth King is very busy running the finest city in the world, but he'll see you as soon as time permits.

AANG
If we're going to be here for a month, we should spend our time looking for Appa.

JOO DEE
I'll be happy to escort you anywhere you'd like to go.

The kids all exchange concerned looks. Toph pipes up.

TOPH
We don't need a baby-sitter.

JOO DEE
Oh, I won't get in the way. And to leave you alone would make me a bad host. Where shall we start?

It's clear she's not going anywhere.

EXT. BA SING SE'S LOWER RING - LATER

The kids and Joo Dee stand in front of a PET SALESMEN who has a bunch of birds and animals in cages. As they talk, Momo tries to steal nuts out of a birdcage and is attacked by its squawking inhabitants.

PET SALESMAN
I'm sorry, but I haven't heard anything about a flying bison. I didn't even know there were any.

AANG
If someone wanted to sell a stolen animal without anyone knowing, where would they go?

The pet salesman looks at Joo Dee, who somehow manages to smile at him intimidatingly. Sokka tries to grill him.

SOKKA
Where's the black market? Who runs it? Come on, you know.

PET SALESMAN
Uh, that would be illegal...

He sees Momo wrestling for nuts with his bird.

PET SALESMAN
You'll have to leave now. Your lemur is harassing my sparrowkeets.

Joo Dee gathers the kids and ushers them away.

EXT. BA SING SE'S MIDDLE RING - LATER

The kids and Joo Dee question a STUDENT outside Ba Sing Se U.

STUDENT
I've never seen any Sandbenders or nomads around here. You should ask Professor Zei. He teaches the class on the desert cultures.

The kids nod wearily, knowing that's a lost cause.

SOKKA
Right. And which of your professors could we ask about the war with the Fire Nation?

The student looks at Joo Dee, who subtly shakes her head. Sokka looks back at her, and she quickly stops.

STUDENT
Uh, I don't know, I'm not a political science student. I have to get to class.

The student takes off and Joo Dee smiles.

EXT. KIDS' NEW HOUSE - LATER

Joo Dee escorts the kids to the door of their house.

JOO DEE
Well, I'm sorry no one has seen your bison. Why don't you go get some rest? Someone will be over with dinner later.

She walks off. As the kids go in, Sokka sees their next door neighbor, a man named PONG, watching them curiously.

SOKKA
(to the kids)
Hey, come with me.

He checks to see that Joo Dee is gone, then leads the kids over to Pong. Pong looks at Aang with wonder.

PONG
You're the Avatar! I heard you were in town. I'm Pong.

AANG
Nice to meet you, Pong.

SOKKA
So Pong, what's going on with this city? Why is everyone here so scared to talk about the war?

Pong glances around, nervously.

PONG
War? Scared? What do you mean?

TOPH
I can feel you shaking.

Pong looks around again to see if anyone is watching, then leans in to whisper.

PONG
Look, I'm just a minor government official. I've waited three years to get this house. I don't want to get into trouble.

KATARA
Get in trouble with who?

PONG
(terrified)
Shhhh. Listen, you can't mention the war here. And whatever you do, stay away from the Dai Li.

He ducks inside and shuts his door in their faces, leaving the kids more confused than ever.

INT. ZUKO AND UNCLE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Zuko lies on a couch in their tiny apartment while Uncle putters around their little kitchenette.

UNCLE
Would you like a pot of tea?

ZUKO
We've been working in a tea shop all day. I'm sick of tea.

UNCLE
Sick of tea? That's like being sick of breathing.

He starts searching through drawers and cabinets.

UNCLE
Have you seen our spark rocks to heat up the water?

EXT. ZUKO AND UNCLE'S APARTMENT - SAME

Jet spies through the window, watching Uncle's search.

JET
They're not there.

He opens his hand and we see he has their flint and steel.

JET
You'll have to Firebend, old man.

He sees Uncle leave the apartment, and Jet ducks for cover.

JET
Where are you going?

After a moment, he hears the apartment door open and looks back through the window.

UNCLE (THROUGH THE WINDOW)
I borrowed our neighbors'. Such kind people.

He pulls out the spark rocks and starts a fire on his little stove. Jet shakes his head in frustration.

INT. KIDS' HOUSE - DAY

The kids sit in their fancy living room, totally discouraged. Katara reads a copy of the Ba Sing Se Courier-Times-Journal. Suddenly, she perks up.

KATARA
I've got it! I know how we're going to see the Earth King.

TOPH
How are we supposed to do that?
(imitating Joo Dee)
"One doesn't just pop in on the Earth King."

KATARA
(she points to the paper)
The king is having a party at the palace tonight for his pet bear.

Everyone seems confused.

AANG
You mean... platypus-bear?

KATARA
No, it just says "bear".

SOKKA
Certainly you mean his pet skunk-bear?

TOPH
Or his armadillo-bear?

AANG
Gopher-bear?

KATARA
Just bear.

Everyone exchanges puzzled looks.

TOPH
This place is weird.

KATARA
The palace will be packed. We can sneak in with the crowd.

TOPH
Won't work.

KATARA
Why not?

TOPH
Well, no offense to you simple country folk, but a real society crowd would spot you a mile away. You've got no manners.

KATARA
Excuse me? I've got no manners? You're not exactly Lady Fancy Fingers.

TOPH
I learned proper society behavior and chose to leave it. You never learned anything. And frankly, it's a little too late.

SOKKA
A-ha! But you learned it. You could teach us.

AANG
Yeah, I'm mastering every element. How hard can manners be?

He hops up and bows to Sokka, Katara, and Momo.

AANG
(in a snooty accent)
Good evening, Mr. Sokka Water Tribe, Miss Katara Water Tribe, Lord Momo of the Momo Dynasty...
(bowing to Momo)
Your Momo-ness.

Sokka stands and bows to Aang.

SOKKA
Avatar Aang, how you do go on.

They go into an elaborate bowing routine, bowing to each other until they knock heads painfully. As they rub their brows, Toph shakes her head.

TOPH
Katara might be able to pull it off, but you two would be lucky to pass as busboys.

Sokka looks up at her, sadly.

SOKKA
But I feel so fancy.

INT. KIDS' HOUSE - LATER

Toph and Katara come down the stairs, all done up for the party and looking incredible. Aang and Sokka are blown away.

AANG
Wow. You look beautiful.

Katara blushes and starts to respond, but Toph stops her.

TOPH
Don't talk to the commoners, Katara. First rule of society.

KATARA
We'll get in the party and then find a way to let you in through the side gate.

EXT. TEA SHOP - NIGHT

Jet, looking haggard, lurks near the entrance to the tea shop. Smellerbee and Longshot come up behind him, but he doesn't notice.

SMELLERBEE
Jet, we need to talk.

Jet wheels around, startled.

JET
What?
(seeing who it is)
Oh, great, it's you guys. Where have you been? I could use some help with surveillance here.

Longshot puts his arm around her for support.

SMELLERBEE
We've been talking, and we think you're becoming obsessed with this. It's not healthy.

JET
Oh really? You both think this?

He looks at Longshot, who nods.

SMELLERBEE
We came here to make a fresh start, but you won't let this go, even though there's no real proof.

JET
Well, maybe if you'd help me-

SMELLERBEE
Jet, you've got to stop this.

JET
Maybe you've forgotten why we need to start over. Maybe you've forgotten about how the Fire Nation left us all homeless, how they wiped out all the people we loved.

Smellerbee and Longshot sigh. They haven't forgotten.

JET
If you don't want to help me, I'll get the evidence on my own.

He walks across the street toward the tea shop, leaving his friends.

INT. TEA SHOP - NIGHT

The shop is filled with CUSTOMERS, and Uncle happily pours tea for them while Zuko busses tables. A couple of EARTH NATION SOLDIERS happily accept a refill from Uncle.

SOLDIER 1
This is the best tea in the city.

UNCLE
The secret ingredient is love.

As Uncle returns to the counter, Pao steps out of the back and smiles at his full shop. He looks at Uncle.

PAO
I think you're due for a raise.

Jet bursts through the front door, looking totally disheveled and carrying his hook-swords. He scowls at Zuko and Uncle.

JET
I'm tired of waiting.
(to the crowd)
These two men are Firebenders!

Uncle and Zuko share a panicked look.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. TEA SHOP - NIGHT

Jet has just confronted Uncle and Zuko. He has his swords drawn but Uncle and Zuko are maintaining their cool in front of the soldiers.

JET
(to soldiers)
I know they're Firebenders -- I saw the old man heating his tea!

The soldiers exchange puzzled looks.

SOLDIER 1
He works in a tea shop.

JET
He's a Firebender, I'm telling you!

The soldiers are unmoved, and see Jet as the disruption.

SOLDIER 1
Drop your swords, boy. Nice and easy...

Jet ignores them and steps toward Uncle.

JET
You'll have to defend yourself, then everyone will know. Go ahead, show them what you can do.

The soldiers start toward Jet, but Zuko quickly grabs their swords and jumps between Jet and Uncle, ready to fight.

ZUKO
You want a show? I'll give you a show!

Jet attacks, and he and Zuko begin a hook-swords versus double-broadswords super-duel as people in the tea shop run for cover.

EXT. ENTRANCE GATE TO THE OVAL - NIGHT

Katara and Toph walk toward the gate in their fancy outfits. A group of equally fancy PARTYGOERS are lined up at the gate while some soldiers and Dai Li agents watch over them. They get in the line and make their way to the HEAD GUARD.

HEAD GUARD
Invitation please.

Toph pulls out her Beifong family passport.

TOPH
I think this will do.

The guard looks down at it, but doesn't take it.

HEAD GUARD
No entry without an invitation.
Step out of line, please.

TOPH
Look, the Pangs and the Yumsoon-
Hans are waiting in there for us.
I'm going to have to tell them who
didn't let me in.

HEAD GUARD
Step out of line, please.

He pushes them aside and takes invitations from the people behind them. A serious-looking man (LONG FENG) walks up to the gate. The guards immediately snap-to and salute him. Katara grabs Toph's hand and rushes toward him.

KATARA
Sir?

Long Feng turns, and Katara bats her eyes fetchingly.

KATARA
I'm sorry to bother you, but my
cousin lost our invitations.
(whispering to him)
She's blind.
(normal voice)
Do you think you could help us?
Our family's inside and I'm sure
they're very worried.

He studies the girls for a moment, then bows.

LONG FENG
I am honored. Please come with me.

He ushers them past the gate.

INT. THE OVAL PALACE - NIGHT

This is the most fantastic palace we've ever seen, all decked-out for the KING'S BEAR's birthday. The bear is chained up at the head of a long table. Two nervous ROYALS sit on either side of the it, constantly ducking as it swipes food from their plates.

BEAR
(ROARING)

ROYAL 1
He's taking all the good stuff!

ROYAL 2
Quiet, you don't know what I had to do to get seats this near the bear.

The girls and Long Feng walk into the party. Katara is momentarily flabbergasted, but tries to keep cool.

LONG FENG
It's beautiful, isn't it? By the way, I'm Long Feng. I'm a cultural minister to the king.

KATARA
I'm Hwamei, and this is Dung.

Toph scowls at her fake name.

LONG FENG
Now, where is your family? I'd love to meet them.

Katara takes a fake glance around the room.

KATARA
Uh, I don't see them right now, but I'm sure we'll find them soon. Thanks for all your help...

She starts to lead Toph away, but Long Feng stays with them.

LONG FENG
Don't worry. As your escort, it would be dishonorable to abandon you ladies without finding your family first. We'll keep looking.

He ushers them away into the party.

EXT. SIDE GATE TO THE OVAL - NIGHT

Sokka and Aang (and Momo, too) wait impatiently near the side entrance to the Oval Palace.

AANG
Where are they?

SOKKA
Look, I came up with a back-up plan. We dress Momo like a ghost, okay? He flies by the guards, creating a distraction, then we blast a hole in the wall--

AANG
Or we could go in with these guys.

He points over at the gate where a group of WAIT STAFF unload a wagon of food and carry it into the palace.

AANG
Toph said we might pass as busboys.

SOKKA
Okay, but remember that Momo ghost plan. I think it's a winner.

EXT. SERVANTS' ENTRANCE - LATER

Aang and Sokka, dressed in waiters' uniforms, carry a huge covered platter past a bored guard. Once inside, Aang lifts the lid from the platter and Momo hops out. They head into the party.

EXT. TEA SHOP - NIGHT

Jet and Zuko crash through the door of the shop, still fighting, while Uncle, Pao, and the soldiers follow. They fight their way through the streets of Ba Sing Se, knocking over carts and market stalls as they go.

JET
You must be getting tired of using those swords. Why don't you go ahead and Firebend at me?

UNCLE
(to Jet)
Please, son, you're confused! You don't know what you're doing!

JET
(to Zuko)
Bet you wish he'd help you out with a little fire blast right now.

ZUKO
You're the one who needs help.

Zuko makes a quick lunge that almost takes off Jet's head, but Jet manages to duck and roll out of the way. He yells to the crowd that's gathering to watch the fight.

JET
You see that? The Fire Nation is trying to silence me!
(to Zuko)
It'll never happen.

He jumps back into the fight.

INT. THE OVAL PALACE - NIGHT

Aang and Sokka mill about in the crowd, refilling water glasses.

AANG
Where are Toph and Katara?

SOKKA
Forget about them, just keep an eye out for the king.

AANG
I don't know what he looks like.

SOKKA
You know: royal, flowing robe, fancy jewelry.

Aang looks around at the fabulous crowd of guests.

AANG
That could be anyone.

Toph and Katara emerge through the crowd.

TOPH
Another crab puff, please?

AANG
You found us!

TOPH
I'd know your little footsteps anywhere, Twinkletoes.

SOKKA
Thanks for letting us in.

KATARA
Sorry, but the guy who escorted us in won't let us out of his sight.

SOKKA
What guy?

Katara looks around, but now Long Feng is nowhere to be found. However, Joo Dee comes rushing up to them, frantic.

JOO DEE
What are you doing here? You have to leave immediately or we'll all be in terrible trouble.

She looks around nervously and tries to herd the kids out.

SOKKA
Not until we see the king.

JOO DEE
You don't understand, you must go.

As she tries to push them out, Aang spills his water pitcher on a FANCY LADY.

FANCY LADY
Aaagh!

AANG
Sorry, no, don't shout.

He quickly Airbends her dry, leaving her dress and hair totally poofed out. She looks at him with wonder.

FANCY LADY
The Avatar! Oh, I didn't know the Avatar would be here!

Everyone in the party now stares at Aang, who smiles sheepishly. Joo Dee gets a look of dread on her face. Sokka leans in to Aang.

SOKKA
You keep their attention while I look for the king.

AANG
Watch this, everybody!

While Sokka sneaks off, Aang Waterbends some water and colorful, non-alcoholic beverages out of glasses on a nearby table into a swirling display.

CROWD
Oooooooh!

They all applaud.

EXT. BA SING SE'S LOWER RING - NIGHT

Zuko and Jet continue to fight through the streets. A group of EARTH NATION SOLDIERS rush in, accompanied by a few DAI LI AGENTS. They quickly surround the boys.

DAI LI AGENT
Drop your weapons!

Jet immediately points at Uncle and Zuko.

JET
Arrest them! They're Firebenders!

UNCLE
This poor boy is confused. We're just simple refugees.

Pao steps forward and angrily points at Jet.

PAO
This young man wrecked my tea shop and assaulted my employees!

The Earth Nation soldiers from the shop step forward.

SOLDIER 1
It's true, sir. We saw the whole thing. This crazy kid attacked the finest tea-maker in the city.

UNCLE
(blushing)
Aw, that's very sweet.

The soldiers and agents move in on Jet and grab him.

DAI LI AGENT
Come with us, son.

JET
You don't understand! They're Fire Nation! You have to believe me!

As they drag Jet away, we see Smellerbee and Longshot watch from the crowd, then quickly disappear.

INT. OVAL PALACE - NIGHT

With a loud gong and a flurry of drums and horns, the EARTH KING enters the room surrounded by his ROYAL ENTOURAGE. Sokka watches from the side of the room.

SOKKA
Aang! The Earth King!

He points to the royal entourage. Aang creates an air scooter, and rides it toward the king.

AANG
Greetings, Your Majesty!

SOKKA
Let me go. *

The entourage sees him coming and quickly steps up to protect the king from this surprise attack. Sokka tries to sneak in behind them to get to the king, but is quickly grabbed by two Dai Li agents. Agents come out of the crowd and snatch Katara and Toph as well. Aang sees Sokka get hauled off and stops his scooter. As he looks around for Katara and Toph, Long Feng strides up to him and bows.

LONG FENG
Avatar, it is a great honor to meet you. I am Long Feng, Grand Secretariat of Ba Sing Se and head of the Dai Li. I'd like to talk to you. Your friends will be waiting for us in the library.

Aang has no choice but to follow him out.

INT. OVAL PALACE LIBRARY - NIGHT

The kids stand in front of Long Feng.

SOKKA
Why won't you let us talk to the king? We have information that could defeat the Fire Nation!

LONG FENG
The Earth King has no time to get involved with political squabbles and the day to day minutia of military activities.

AANG
This could be the most important thing he's ever heard.

LONG FENG
What's most important to His Royal Majesty is maintaining the cultural heritage of Ba Sing Se. All his duties relate to issuing decrees on such matters. It's my job to oversee the rest of the city's resources, including the military.

KATARA
So the king is just a figurehead.

TOPH
He's your puppet!

Long Feng looks aghast.

LONG FENG
Oh, no, no. His Majesty is an icon, a god to his people. He can't sully his hands with the hourly changes of an endless war.

SOKKA
But we found out about a solar eclipse that will leave the Fire Nation defenseless. You could lead an invasion--

LONG FENG
Enough! I don't want to hear your ridiculous plan. It is the strict policy of Ba Sing Se that the war not be mentioned within the walls.

As he talks, we CROSS CUT this scene with-

INT. DAI LI RE-EDUCATION CENTER - NIGHT

Jet is dragged into a stark room with a single candle sitting on a table in front of what looks like a dental chair with straps. Two DAI LI AGENTS strap him into the chair.

CROSS CUT TO:

LONG FENG
Constant news of an escalating war would throw the citizens of Ba Sing Se into a state of panic.

CROSS CUT TO:

JET
You have to believe me! They're Firebenders! They won't stop until they win the war!

DAI LI AGENT
(eerily soothing)
Calm down. You're safe now.

CROSS CUT TO:

LONG FENG
Our economy would be ruined. Our peaceful way of life, our traditions, would disappear.

CROSS CUT TO:

DAI LI AGENT
There's no war in Ba Sing Se.

Jet looks at him like he's completely crazy.

JET
What are you talking about? Where do you think all the refugees come from! You can't hide it-

One of the Dai Li agents gags Jet, using a strange gag contraption. (Per standards, this should not be an imitable cloth gag.)

CROSS CUT TO:

LONG FENG
In silencing talk of conflict, Ba Sing Se remains a peaceful, orderly utopia. The last one on earth.

CROSS CUT TO:

Jet struggles against his bonds.

DAI LI AGENT
There is no war within the walls. Here we are safe. Here we are free.

INT. OVAL PALACE LIBRARY - NIGHT

The kids look at Long Feng like he's stark raving mad.

KATARA
You can't keep the truth from all these people! They have to know!

AANG
I'll tell them. I'll make sure everyone knows.

Long Feng looks at him, cold.

LONG FENG
Until now you've been treated as our honored guest. But from now on you will be watched every moment by Dai Li agents. If you mention the war to anyone, you'll be expelled from the city.
(beat)
I understand you've been looking for your bison. It would be quite a shame if you were not able to complete your quest.

The kids sit silently, enraged.

LONG FENG
Now Joo Dee will show you home.

A WOMAN, not the Joo Dee we know, enters the room. She bows. She has the same corporate smile as the old Joo Dee.

NEW JOO DEE
Come with me, please.

The kids look at her, confused and terrified.

KATARA
What happened to Joo Dee?

NEW JOO DEE
(smiling cheerfully)
I'm Joo Dee. I'll be your host as long as you're in our wonderful city.

Totally freaked out and scared, the kids slowly stand and leave with the new Joo Dee.

END OF SHOW.